A WINDISH PROTESTANT COMMUNITY IN BETHLEHEM, PENNSYLVANIA

CONFERENCE

ON

400 YEARS OF SOUTH SLAVIC PROTESTANT REFORMATION

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE CENTER FOR BALKAN AND SLAVIC STUDIES

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DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to Dr. & Mrs. Helmut Lehmann as they embark on a new life after many years of service to the Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.

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Introduction

After the first hundred years of independence the thirteen American colonies of 1776 had become a respected world power. Political growth was costly. By 1876 the young nation had waged two wars with Britain, a war with Mexico and a cruel Civil War. Inspite of these political growing pains, America had experienced tremendous economic growth. The acquisition of territory with vast natural resources, cheap immigrant labor, as well as, scientific and technological advances had allowed the country to build a large and productive industrial system. This economic security generated an optimistic national spirit that looked forward to the challenge of the next century. With the acquisition of new territories and the rapid development of sophisticated machinery the nation now required a larger labor force.

In the first century of growth the American labor force was composed of immigrants from the British Isles, Germany and Scandanavia. These vigorous peoples had worked long hours on the farms, the railroads and assembly lines of American factories for subsistence wages. After 1876 the expanding nation welcomed a new wave of immigrants. These new energetic peoples came from the Eastern regions of the European continent. They, like the previous generation of immigrants, would work long hours in the factories and the mines of their new homeland. For a ten-hour working day these people, like their predecessors,

would receive starvation wages.

Among the various nationalities that emmigrated from Eastern Europe after 1876 were the Slovenes. Reviewing the immigration records of the period scholars have found it difficult to accurately estimate the number of Slovenes who came to America. At the time of the great emmigration Slovenia was a province in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Unenlightened immigration officials usually listed the Slovene emigrees as Austrians, Germans, Yugoslavs, Hungarians and Croats. [1] On the basis of recent research, however, ethnographers feel that a reasonable estimate would place the total number of Slovene immigrants between 250,000 and 350,000. [2]

This estimate of Slovene immigration includes a small group of hardy farmers who called themselves the Winds. These people came from the mountainous region of East Slovenia known as Prekmurje. Suffering from centuries of economic hardship and excessive taxation the Winds hoped to build a better life for themselves and their children in America, the nation of unlimited opportunities.[3] After selling their farms these people travelled to America and established small Windish communities in Chicago; Pittsburgh; Bridgeport, Conneticut; New Brunswick, Perth Amboy, Newark and Elizabeth, New Jersey.[4] The largest settlement to be established by the Winds or Prekmurje Slovenes was in the Lehigh Valley of Eastern Pennsylvania. From the available immigration statistics it appears that the largest influx of Prekmurje Slovenes occured between the years 1907 and 1914. [5] Following the First World War the number of Slovenes coming to the Lehigh Valley slowly declined. By the time of the Great Depression estimates project that six thousand of the Prekmurje Slovenes had made the Lehigh Valley their new home.[6] Among the clothes and small amounts of money, these people carried with them their faith, their customs and their visions.

Although the inhabitants of Prekmurje are ethnically Slovenes, three characteristics distinguished and separated this group from the larger Slovene community. Both in America and Europe the Prekmurje Slovenes were noted for 1) their 'separatist' ethnic consciousness, 2) their unique dialect and 3) the large number of Evangelical Lutherans.

The 'separatist' ethnic consciousness among the Slovenes of Prekmurje was generated by the unique political relationship of Prekmurje with Hungary. As previously mentioned the lands of the Slovenes were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Since the region of Prekmurje borders the larger and stronger Hungarian Kingdom, the small mountainous province was naturally controlled by the Magyar nobility. As early as the 9th Century Magyar nobles established themselves as the rulers of this region inhabitied by Slovenes. With the creation of the Dual-Kingdom in 1867 Prekmurje was officially incorporated into the Hungarian Kingdom. The larger segment of Slovenia, however, continued to be administered by the Austrians. As a result of this millenium of Magyar domination Prekmurje developed a distinct ethnic consciousness which ultimately separated the Prekmurje Slovenes from their compatriots. One expression of this separation is the lack of support the Prekmurje Slovenes gave to the Slovene nationalist movement of the 19th Century. When Austrian controlled Slovenia developed a national spirit that denounced Viennese supremacy, the Prekmurje Slovenes divorced themselves from the movement and reaffirmed their alligiance to the Hungarian Kingdom. A second expression of this politically generated 'separate spirit of Prekmurje' is the utilization of the ethnic label 'Wind'. As Dr. Susel writes, "Although the Slovenes of Prekmurje used 'Slovenci' or 'Slovenje' when speaking of themselves, they definitely preferred the ethnic classification of 'Wind'.[7] For Dr. Susel this preference is an indication of "the low level of Slovene national consciousness in the Prekmurje area."[8] Dr. Stiegler, the

second pastor of the Windish Lutheran Church in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania feels that the Winds utilized this term because they "considered themselves to be superior to the Southern Slavs."[9] Regardless of the reasons behind the preference, it is obvious that the long-term Hungarian administration of Prekmurje affected the national consciousness by generating a separatist attitude among the Slovene people of Prekmurje. As a result of the Magyar influence the Winds created a society that blended the Hungarian and Slovene traditions. An excellent example of this homogenizing tendency is the second characteristic peculiar to the Prekmurje-Slovenes - their dialect.

The political affiliation with Magyars coupled with the geographic isolation of the mountains resulted in the evolution of a very distinctive dialect. The dialect differs from Standard Slovene in its employement of 1) regional variations and 2) Hungarian orthography. [10] The Prekmurje Slovenes who settled in the United States used this dialect in their homes, churches, economic and cultural organizations. In 1921 the Prekmurje Slovenes established a newspaper in the Prekmurjian dialect that naturally catered to the members of this immigrant community.[11] The 'separatist' ethnic consciousness and unique dialect united the members of the Prekmurjian community. Unfortunately, this ethnic consciousness also separated them from the larger Slovene community.

The third characteristic of the Prekmurje Slovenes or Winds was the presence of Evangelical Lutheranism. Dr. Stiegler estimates in 1941 that 50% of the Winds in America belonged to the Evangelical Lutheran church.[12] From the available resources it appears that Windish students returning from the German Universities carried the teachings of the Reformation with them to Prekmurje in the 16th Century. The confessional understandings of Lutheranism found a sympathetic and responsive audience among the Winds. Despite the bloody wars and the persecution of a militant Counter-Reformation, many Winds remained loyal

to their Evangelical principles. In the beginning of the 19th Century the Hungarian government passed the long-awaited laws that established religious freedom in the kingdom. The Slovenes began the process of repairing their congregations and churches. Dr. Stiegler reports that the Winds eventually established twelve large Lutheran parishes in their European homeland. [13]

The middle of the 19th Century was a time of trial for the newly recognized evangelical faith. Although Prekmurje was geographically isolated from the mainstream of European affairs, the people felt the tremors of confusion and hostility generated by the turbulent social upheavals of the 1840's. Pastors, distressed with the oppressive economic and political situation in Prekmurje, consider possible solutions to the social needs of their parishoners. Utilizing the Marxist terminology of alienation politics, Sebjanic in his book The Protestant Movement of Slovenes in Pannonia sketches the ecclesiastical situation of Prekmurje in the 1840's. In 1848 it appears that the Protestant Slovaks approached the Protestant Slovenes with a proposal of unification. Such an ecclesiastical union would strengthen the Slovak - Slovene political struggle against Hungarian oppression and Viennese supremacy. Discussions were led by Josef Miloslav Hurban, a Slovak Lutheran, and Janos Berke, a Slovene Lutheran pastor with strong political convictions. After much deliberation Berke and the Slovene pastors decided to dissassociate themselves from the political strivings of the Slovaks. Sebjanic expresses his dissappointment in the failure of the Prekmurjian clergy to commit themselves to political action. Sebjanic feels that the Lutheran clerics had forgotten the principles of the Reformation.[14] Regardless of the decision, this series of events demonstrates the struggle of the Lutheran clergy as they attempted to define their role in political affairs. In addition, these events illustrate the respect the people had for their pastors. Although life in Prekmurje was difficult, when the clergy chose a

policy that did not openly confront or oppose the government, the people of Prekmurje respected their decision and sought other means of changing the situation. This issue is crucial in understanding the European and American Windish community. The office of the pastorate was held in high esteem by members of the Windish Lutheran community. The Winds who left Europe carried this respect for the pastorate with them to America.

Towards the end of the 19th Century the Winds began to hear of new opportunities in America, the land of unlimited possiblility. As the Winds began to emmigrate to America they naturally carried their Lutheran heritage with them. Once in America the Winds desired to establish Lutheran parishes that would preserve the Lutheran tradition by preaching the Gospel, teaching the Catechism and administering the Sacraments in the 'Windish' dialect. In the small Windish settlements Lutheran parishes were organized to minister to the spiritual needs of the Winds. The large Windish Lutheran community in the Lehigh Valley also founded a parish. Using the available parish documents this paper will retrace the steps taken by the Windish community in the Lehigh Valley to organize a parish that would minister to them in the Windish dialect.

For the sake of clarity it is important to note that this particular Windish Lutheran community, in addition to the unique dialect, also maintained the 'separatist' ethnic consciousness by referring to themselves as 'Winds,' 'Wends,' and 'Slovenes.' This custom is evident in the seven decades of church documents in which all three names periodically appear.

The Early Years: Pastor Lambert

As previously mentioned the immigration to the Lehigh Valley began in 1907. Many Slovenes decided to purchase small inexpensive homes in the Southside section of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The nearby steel mills offered low-paying but steady employment to the eager uneducated immigrants. Business minded

indiviudals opened small stores that would cater to the needs of the growing Windish community. Having solved the issues of home and employment the Winds turned to the next issue -- the church. The people of St. Peter's German Lutheran Church invited the newcomers to worship in their nearby sanctuary. The Winds accepted the generous invitation of the German Lutherans. The conviently located St. Peter's was an answer to their prayers. Not only was the church within walking distance, the worship services were conducted in German, a language which the majority of Winds understood. [15] With the arrival of new immigrants the Windish community grew rapidly. Leaders of the Windish community and St. Peter's felt that the Windish contingent was large enough to establish a Windish Lutheran parish. Through the encouragement of St. Peter's Church Council and the pastor, the Reverend Leibensperger, the Winds took the initial step in creating a parish of their own. The vision of the Winds materialized on Good Friday, April 9, 1909, when they assembled in St. Peter's to worship for the first time in Windish. [16] Members of the Windish community led the service by reading the liturgy, scripture and sermon in the language of their Prekmurjian homeland. At the end of the year the Winds decided to take the important second step and call a pastor. The leaders of the Windish Lutheran community extended a call to the Reverend William A. Lambert then serving St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Dr. Stiegler comments that, "Reverend Lambert was an American minister who tried to learn the Windish language." [17]

On February 10, 1910 the Windish and Slovak Lutherans joined forces to organize the Slovenian-Slovak Lutheran Congregation.[18]

An executive committee was formed which consisted of Stefan Duh and Alex Kelemen who represented the Wendish majority and John Simsak and George Hudock the Slovak element. The Slovak representation, however was short-

lived for on May 30, 1910 they announced their withdrawal from the group.[19]

Despite this setback the Winds decided to forge ahead with their plans. Under the leadership of Reverend Lambert the parish purchased a piece of property on East Fourth Street for $2,500. With 'pastor and plot' in hand the eager Church Council applied to the State for corporate recognition. The State of Pennsylvania granted a charter of corporation to 'St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Slovenian Congregation' on October 11, 1910.[20] Immediately, the parishoners contributed the funds necessary for the construction of a church. At a cost of $8,000 the solid foundation was poured into the excavated site at East Fourth Street. Adding a simple wooden roof to the foundation, the parish now had a large room in which they could conduct their Worship Services. With banners, flags, hymns and prayers of thanksgiving the congregation dedicated their simple church on February 14, 1911.[21] In the next three years the Windish community would grow steadily with the arrival of friends and family. The pace was interrupted for several years by the First World War.

The Years of Growth: Pastor Stiegler

Apparently the attempts of Reverend Lambert to learn the Windish language were not satisfactory. Desiring to have the Gospel preached and the Sacraments administered by a pastor fluent in their native dialect, the Church Council extended a call in June 1914 to Dr. Ernest Stiegler, who was serving the Windish Lutheran Church in New Brunswick, New Jersey.[22]

Dr. Stiegler was born in the Austro-Hungarian town of Oldenburg in 1889. He was the son of a Lutheran archdeacon. Influenced by the example of his father, Stiegler attended seminary in Rostok and Sophron, Germany. Upon the completion of his pastoral studies Stiegler returned to Hungary and earned his doctorate at the age of 22. Following his ordination to the ministry of Word

Hungary

and Sacraments in 1911 he served as personal chaplain to the presiding Lutheran Bishop of Hungary. In 1912 the small Windish Lutheran parish in New Brunswick, New Jersey petitioned the Bishop of Hungary for a pastor who could minister to them in Hungarian and Windish. Personally acquainted with Reverend Stiegler's leadership abilities, the Bishop of Hungary informed him of the pastoral opportunity in America. Aware of the growing Hungarian and Windish emmigration to America Reverend Stiegler accepted the invitation of the parish in New Jersey. Upon arrival in America Dr. Stiegler, a linguistically talented individual, learned both English and Windish. These new languages complemented his linguistic repetoire that included German, Hungarian, French, Latin, Hebrew, Greek, Ukrainian and Slovak. [23] After a two year ministry in the Windish parish of New Brunswick, Dr. Stiegler accepted the call to serve the growing Windish Lutheran Church in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Dr. Haas, President (Bishop) of the Pennsylvania Lutheran Ministerium, installed Dr. Stiegler as Pastor of St. John's on July 4, 1914.[24]

As previously mentioned the church was only a large basement on East Fourth Street. Once installed Dr. Stiegler immediately set out to raise the monies necessary to construct a larger church St. John's '50th Anniversary' brochure recounts this and other building projects initiated by Dr. Stiegler.

> Under the capable and efficient leadership of Dr. E. A. Stiegler, a new house of worship, complete with all its furnishings; altar, stained glass windows, bells, chandeliers, organ, etc., along with additional property was purshcased at a total cost of $45,000. The edifice, which remains the congregations place of worship to this day, was styled after churches in the people's homeland. A parish school where instructions in both Wendish and English were conducted under the supervision of Dr. Stiegler and a qualified teacher was maintained by the congregation. In 1918 a parsonage

was erected and in 1923 a home was provided for the teacher. Additional property, a farm, was purchased on which a hall was constructed. This is known as St. John's Park and was used during the summer months for church gatherings and picnics. Other properties, adjacent to and behind the church, were purchased at a cost of approximately $27,000. In 1939 the church tower was reconstructed and in 1944-45 the church interior was renovated for a sum total of $22,000.[25]

In addition to these massive building projects in his parish, Dr. Stiegler served as the first president of the Hungarian Synod of the Lutheran Church. Amidst the demands of his pastoral and synodical responsibilities, Reverend Stiegler also edited a Windish Lutheran Service Book in 1936, a Windish Lutheran Cathecism in 1938 and a Windish Lutheran Hymnal in 1941.

FIGURE 1 FIGURE 2 FIGURE 3

For the first 25 years the members of St. John's used the Hungarian and Windish Worship Services printed in the hymnbooks they had carried with them from Prekmurje. Having heard the Worship Service since childhood, the first generation of Winds could sing the Windish and Hungarian liturgy from memory. When the worshipping community grew to include the second generation of Winds, the number of old hymnals was insufficient. Dr. Stiegler met the crisis by editing a Windish Service Book. The small book was entitled Bozse Szlüzsbe Réd. It contains an Order of Service and Psalter to be used by the pastor and parish in the Windish worship services. It is interesting to note that Dr. Stiegler did not choose to reprint the European Windish Liturgy. Instead he chose to 'Americanize' the worship pattern of the parish by translating into Windish the Service of Matins from the 1917 Lutheran Common Service Book.[26] In addition to translating the text of the service Reverend Stiegler also altered the Order of Worship. Normally, the Lutheran Service of Matins omitted the Prayer of

Confession and the Apostles' Creed. The Common Service Book, however, permitted alterations in the service to accommodate the preferences of individual parishes. As a result of this provision Reverend Stiegler added the Prayer and Creed to his translation of the Service. The following is a presentation of the Windish Lutheran Service. The Service proceeds from the Opening Hymn (Cérkevna Peszem), to The Versicles, Prayer (Molitev), The Venite, The Confession (Szvéti i pravicsen Boug), a Hymn (Cérkevna Peszem), Creed (Apostolszko Vere Vadlüványe), Psalter (Zsoltár), Gloria Patri, Lessons, Hymn (Cérkevna Peszem), Sermon (Predga), Prayer (Molitev), Hymn (Cérkevna Peszem), Kyrie (Boug szmiluj sze nad nami), Lord's Prayer (Ocsa nas), Benediction, Hymn (Cérkevna Peszem).[27]

The second section of the Service Book, the Psalter (Zsoltár), consists of twenty-five Psalms selected by Dr. Stiegler for use in the worship service. Every Sunday the congregation and pastor responsively read the liturgically appropriate psalm from their Windish Psalter. The following is a reprint of the 23rd Psalm. The sentences in brackets are read by the pastor. The congregation responds to the pastor with the sentence that appears without brackets.

ZSOLTÁR 23

[Goszpoud je moj pásztér:]

Nika sze mi nezmenka.

[Po zelénoj trávi paszé mené:]

I k hladnim vodam me pela.

[Raszhladí düso mojo:]

Vodi me po právoj pouti, za volo iména szvojega.

[I csi bi hodo po szmrti kmicsni dolej, nebojim sze neszrecse:]

Ár szi tí pri meni, palicza is siba tvoja me troustajo.

[Prjprávlas mi sztol pred líczom mojim, pred nepriátelmi mojimi:]

Namázses z oliom glávo mojo, i natácses pehár moj.

[Dobrouta i szmilenoszt bode z menom vsze dní zsítka mojega:]

Pocsívo bom vu hizsi Goszpodna mojega vzse dní.

After the publication of Bozse Szlüzsbe Réd in 1936 the parish immediately adopted the new 'Windish-American' Order of Service. The liturgy was sung and the Psalms were read as printed in the 31 page pamphlet. The hymns, however, were still selected from the old European hymnbooks. The budget of the church could not afford the printing costs of a Service Book and Hymnal at one time. Eager parishoners would have to wait five years before Dr. Stiegler could assemble a hymnal complete with Windish liturgy, psalms, hymns and prayers.

The next item on the literary agenda was the printing of a Windish Catechism. At the age of eleven each child at St. John's was expected to attend a two year course of religious instruction conducted by the pastor. The number of children entering the class had steadily increased as the Windish Lutheran community produced a second generation. Classes of forty to fifty children were now common to the once tiny parish. In keeping with the Lutheran tradition, the two year course of religious training included instruction in the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the Ten Commandments. The children assembled in the church once and sometimes twice a week for their lessons. Lectures by the pastor were usually supplemented with readings from Luther's Small Catechism. To facilitate the learning process, the pastor often 'requested' the children to memorize appropriate portions of the Catechism. The easy question and answer format developed by Luther in 1529 made his book an indispensible teaching tool.

Having translated Luther's Small Catechism from German into Windish, Dr. Stiegler submitted the text of the Máli Kátekismus to the printers of the Windish newspaper Amerikanszki Szlovencov Glász [American Slovene Voice]. In 1938 the Windish Catechism appeared as an eighteen page pamphlet bound with

heavy black paper. Utilizing Luther's format of question and answer, the text of the Catechism was printed in seven sections -- Introduction (Návod), The Ten Commandments (Od deszétere Zapouvedi), The Apostles' Creed (Od Vere Vadlüványa), The Lord's Prayer (Od Molitve Goszpodnove ali Ocsanasa), Baptism (Od szvétoga Krszta), Lord's Supper (Od vécsérje Krisztusove), and Confirmation (Konfirmácia). [29]

With Service Book and Catechism completed Dr. Stiegler turned his attention to the printing of a Windish Hymnal which would combine the Service Book and hymns used in the Windish Service. After three years of diligent labor Reverend Stiegler had assembled a collection of 515 hymns from the old European Windish Hymnals. The Amerikanszki Szlovencov Glasz printed the hardbound 287 page hymnal in 1941. Intended for public and private worship the book contains the Service, hymns and prayers. The following is a Windish translation of Martin Luther's hymn 'Ein' feste Burg' (A Mighty Fortress is our God).

Trdi grád je nas Boug zmozsni,
Rozsjé ino obramba,
Varje nász, sereg pobozsni,
Kak verni, szvoji hramba,
Nas sztár protivník,
Szvejta poglavník, z-szílov, z-jálnosztjov,
Bori sze z-oblásztjov,
Nakanivsi nász fundati [30]

No hymnal would be complete without the popular Christmas carol 'Silent Night'. Following the European tradition of printing folksongs in the rear of the hymnal, 'Silent Night' appears on page 248. The section devoted to Windish hymns is 250 pages in length.

Tiha noucs, szvéta noucs,

Szpána sze, szamo to,

Szvetí pár verosztüje v-stali,

Dejte Bozse polozsi v-jaszli,

Ka tam szpí preszladko. [31]

Concerned about the social welfare, as well as the spiritual well-being of his parishoners, Dr. Stiegler founded the Windish Lutheran Sick and Benefit Association in 1915. For a minimal fee the Society provided its members and their dependents with some compensation for medical emergencies. The 1944 Parish Bulletin of St. John's printed the following advertisement in Windish and English.

> The Windish Lutheran Sick and Benefit Association invites the members of the St. John's Wendish Evangelical Lutheran Congregation to join. In accordance with the new by-laws the Society pays $9.00 sick benefits per week to its members. The dues are 75 cents. The aggregate sick benefit grows year after year, until it reaches the amount of $900.00 sick benefits at a time of thirty years continual membership. The amount of death benefit is $300.00 or $500.00. All members in good standing may enjoy the facilities of our club. The Society accepts to the Juvenile Death Benefit Branch all children and grandchildren of such parents, who are members of St. John's Windish Lutheran Church, regardless if such parents are of the society or not. [32]

After seventy years of service the Society continues to serve the Windish Community . The offices are located in the Church Office of the parish.

Committed to preserving the Windish Lutheran heritage for their children, the members of St. John's assumed the responsibility and the expense of maintaining a parish school. To insure a high quality of instruction for their children the parish invited a school teacher from Prekmurje to come and

supervise the operation. To make the invitation more appealing the parishoners purchased a house for the teacher. Sándor Polgár accepted the challenge and opened a parochial school at St. John's. Lessons were taught in Windish and English. Classes met during the week in the unused rooms of the church.

In addition to his teaching responsibilities, Polgár supervised a Windish Drama Guild which provided the Windish community of the Lehigh Valley with entertainment in their beloved dialect. The dramatic works presented by the Guild were Polgár's translations of American and European plays. Performers were interested students from the Windish school. In 1925 the Windish Drama Guild presented a musical entitled 'The Apple' (Erdécse Jaboko). The premiere performance opened in the Quinn School auditorium on March 29, 1925. This event is preserved in an elaborate program, printed entirely in Windish by the American Windish Publishing Company. Along with the names of the actors, the program contains a libretto, a summary of the plot and advertisements. The following quote is a reprint of the inside title page.

ERDÉCSE JABOKO

PRIJÉTNA ZMENYBA VU TREJ PREMEMBAJ

Na szlovenszki jezik predelao: Polgár Sándor

-----O-----

'Persoune vu Erdécsem Jaboki

Örzsa, Csiza Andrása vdovica....LUCU ZSÓFI

Gergley, Örzsin szin....GERGÁR PISTA

Borcsa, szirotinszka deklicska....DERVARICS IRMA

Vinotobák Stevan, ovcsár....KOLOSSA GÉZA

Kata, ovcsára zsena....PÉCSEK MARISKA

Vadas Jóska, logárszki pomocsník....POZVÉK JÓSKA

Szücs Ferkó, sujszterszki detics....DÜH FERI

Milika, Ferkóva zárocsnica....ANTALICS MARISKA

Edna goszpá (grofovszka hesi)....HARVÁTH FÁNI

Tutor Manya, compernica....MARICS MARISKA

Naprej dávana vu Bethlehemi, 1925 Márciusa 29-ga, v-Nedelo vecsér ob 8-moj vöri po evang. szlovenszkoga popejvszkoga drüstva kotrigaj, vu Quinn School-a zmejnyaliscsi.[33]

To cover the cost of printing such a fine program, Polgár solicited Windish merchants to place advertisements. The 37 Windish advertisements in the rear of the program attest to the extensive Windish business community in Bethlehem.[34] The following is a reprint of four advertisements as they appeared in the program.

MIKE MERKLIN

SZLOVENSZKI BARBÉR

615 E. FOURTH ST. BETHLEHEM, PA.

Phone 3204

JOSEPH ZRINSZKI

SZLOVENSZKI STOROS

409 E. FOURTH ST. BETHLEHEM,PA.

Phone 3294-R

JOHN ZELKO

SZLOVENSZKI SPENGLAR

416 E. FOURTH ST. BETHLEHEM, PA.

STO SCSÉ DOBER

SOUDER I SZELSZER

piti, naj mené goripoiscse

FRANK BANKO, BOTTLER.

Phone 1609

806 E. FOURTH ST. BETHLEHEM, PA.

With Polgár's retirement in the early 1940's the era of the Windish parochial school and the Drama Guild came to a close. This was one of many changes that St. John's experienced during the era of the Second World War. The Community was no longer as Windish as it had been in 1910. The large number of emmigrants arriving from Prekmurje had declined over the years. The growing second generation understood Windish and may have used it at home, but they preferred to use English. Unlike their parents who had received a limited education in Prekmurje, the second generation of Windish-Americans had numerous opportunites from which to choose. Dr. Stiegler in his 1941 speech 'The History of the Wends' describes the second generation and the Windish community when he says,

> I am very proud of the Windish people for all that they have done to the glory of God and to the good of our country in the short time, less than forty years. We have at present ten boys and girls of our congregation studying in the various colleges of our country,...A number of our girls graduated from our local business schools and are employed in various offices. There are over 100 men in the military service at present. 85% of our people own their own homes and nearly all the members of my parish are naturalized, loyal American citizens. We are proud of the privilege to be Americans but at the same time with equal pride we realize that we are the remnants of a great race -

small in number but rich in its history. [35]

The decline in immigration, the Second World War with it hostility towards anything foreign, as well as the American interests of the second generation prompted the parish of St. John's to alter its vision of ministry. Instead of using Hungarian and Windish exclusively, the Church Council and Pastor began using English in some of the church publications. The first official appearance of English in a publication occurs in the 1943 edition of the Parish Bulletin. Prior to 1943 the newsletter had been printed entirely in Windish. The 1943 edition changes this established pattern with 50% of the articles being printed in English.[36] In many instances the English articles are direct translations of the Windish sections. The following year parishoners received a newsletter with 75% of the articles or advertisements written in English. [37]

As the Windish and Hungarian ministry of St. John's expanded to include English, the Church Council took steps to enlarge the pastoral staff. The members of Council extended a call to the Reverend Stephen Ballek, Pastor of the Windish Lutheran Church in North Arlington, New Jersey. [38] Ballek was no stranger to the Lehigh Valley or St. John's Windish. Born of Windish parents, Ballek was baptized in St. John's. After graduating from Liberty High School in Bethlehem he attended Muhlenberg College and Mt. Airy Theological Seminary. He completed his studies and was ordained to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments in 1936.[39] Reverend Ballek accepted a call to serve the Windish Lutheran Church in North Arlington. After serving this parish for nine years Reverend Ballek accepted the call to help Dr. Stiegler in the ministry at St. John's. In 1946, one year after his arrival, St. John's initiated weekly worship services in English. [40] Reverend Stiegler continued to preach in the Windish and Hungarian worship services. Reverend Ballek assisted Dr Stiegler by conducting the worship services in English. After accepting a call to serve St. Thomas

Lutheran Church, Reverend Ballek left St. John's in 1950. The Church Council commited to the tri-lingual ministry extended a call to the Reverend Frank Flisser. Having served Hungarian parishes in Perth Amboy and Trenton, New Jersey, Reverend Flisser spoke English and Hungarian fluently. He was also acquainted with the Windish dialect.[41] Once at St. John's, Reverend Flisser improved his Windish skills with the help of several members of the parish. As a result of the dedication of Reverend Stiegler and Reverend Flisser, St. John's was able to maintain the Windish, Hungarian and English ministries.

The Years of Transition: Pastor Flisser

When Pastor Flisser joined the staff of St. John's in 1951 the Windish community was producing a third generation of Windish-Americans. Dr. Susel in his article for The Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups accurately describes the situation when he writes,

> The immigrant Slovenes attempted to teach the native language to their children, but generally they were not very successful. Without question most second-generation Slovene Americans acquired some familiarlity with idiomatic Slovene from their parents, but they did not use it among themselves or when it was not absolutely necessary. Rarely do third-and later-generation Slovenes have any real command of the language.[42]

This tendency is evident in the later publications of St. John's which served the second and third generation of Windish-Americans.

On November 8, 1953 the Women's Missionary Society celebrated its Silver Jubilee with a festive dinner. The 23 page program printed especially for the ocassion contained only one page of Windish. The only Windish advertisement in the program was placed by Kulik's Funeral Home.[43] In 1954 a brochure in Windish and English was mailed to parishoners of St. John's announcing plans to

construct a large Christian Education Building for the crowded Sunday School. [44] This appears to be the last major publication that includes both Windish and English. The brochures of future major events, i.e. Dedication of the Christian Education Building (1956), 50th Anniversary (1960), and the 55th Anniversary (1965) would be printed entirely in English.

Dr. Stiegler retired as Senior Pastor of the parish in 1956. Shortly after retiring Dr. Stiegler wrote a book entitled ...So Shall They Reap. The book describes the valiant efforts of a young pastor to help the struggling parishoners of 'Steel City' in the days of the Depression. Reverend Stiegler's listing of the ethnic minorities in 'Steel City' is an accurate description of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Among the many minorities from Eastern Europe living in the fictitious 'Steel City' are the Slovenes. Other than this one mention of a Slovene minority, the work does not refer to or betray any Windish heritage.[45] In 1964, at the age of 75, Dr. Stiegler died.

Reverend Flisser had assumed responsibility for the pastoral direction of the parish when Dr. Stiegler retired in 1956. Under his leadership the parish of St. John's expanded its ministry in English. The Windish ministry though declining would remain a vital part of the program at St. John's. The following chart shows the average attendance at each Windish Service over the last sixty years.[46]

TABLE 1

Although the second and third generation may not use the Windish language, the traditions of the first generation are still evident in the life of the parish. One testimony to the Windish heritage of St. John's is the yearly 'Dues Book'. Following the European custom of paying monthly dues to support the church, parishoners have their monthly contributions recorded in a book that resembles a savings passbook. When the individual presents the book and dues to

one of the church secretaries, the transaction is recorded in the appropriate column. The column headings of each page are printed in Windish and English. The following categories are printed on the top of each page - Month (Meszec), Monthly Dues (Mej. Plácsa), Offering (Áldov), received by (Prejk vzéo). [47] Although this system of monthly dues was at one time the primary source of income for St. John's, the tradition has been replaced with the more conventional Protestant free-will offering. After many years, however, the 'Dues Book'still provides St. John's with a substantial source of income. In 1983 St. John's received $8,517.00 from people who prefer to use the Windish and European custom of monthly church dues.[48]

Although the major publications are printed in English, the seasonal Parish Bulletin always contains a page of news in Windish for those members of the parish who still use the language of the Prekmurjian homeland. The following is an excerpt from the Windish page printed in Parish Bulletin of December 1983.

Lübléne Bratovje ino Szesztre:

Gda mi vász a-lübéznosztjov pozdrávlamo poleg návada nase cerkvi naznánye vam dámo Áventstoga ino Bozsicsnogo vréjmena Bozsi ino Szpoveda réd.

December 18toga - Nedela - 9:15 A.M. Szlovenska Bozsa Szlüzsba pa Szlovenska Szpoved.

10:45 A.M. - Engliska Bozsa Szlüzsba pa Engliska szpoved.

December 24toga - Szvéta Nocs - ob 1/2 8 moj vöri vecserásnya szvétesnya Bozsa Szlüzsba.

December 25toga - Bozsicsni Szvéti Den-

9:15 vgojdno Szlovenszka Bozsa Szlüzsba

10:45 - Engliska Bozsa Szlüzsba [49]

Although many parishoners may not attend the worship services in Windish, the culture of Prekmurje lives in their kitchens. In 1979 St. John's Windish

Lutheran Church Sunday School published a cookbook entitled Favorite Recipes. Among the many delicious recipes one finds the traditional dishes of Prekmurje, i.e. Creamed Cabbage (Szlatko Zelgye) Cucumber Soup (Mlecsne Ubrike), Dumplings (Dödole), Sour Turnips (Repo Kvasziti) and Nut Roll (Dois Koczcz).

The most dramatic statement of Windish heritage at St. John's is the sanctuary itself. As noted in the '50th Anniversary' brochure, the church was 'styled after churches in the peoples' homeland.' Although the present structure has been renovated since its completion in 1918, the sanctuary still has the fine crystal chandeliers and original elevated wooden pulpit. The pulpit alone, testifies to the commitment of these Lutherans to preserve their Windish culture. Following the Prekmurjian tradition, the ornate wooden pulpit in the front of the church is constructed over the high altar. When the pastor stands in this pulpit, he commands a view of the entire main floor and balcony of the sanctuary.

The narthex of the church is unique in that two niches were constructed on the right and left sides. These openings in the wall permit funeral directors to conveniently place an open casket in the church for friends and parishoners to view before the funeral service. The small niche on the right side is intended for the casket of a deceased child. The larger opening on the left may house the casket of an adult. These distinctive architectural features, along with the Windish and Hungarian inscriptions testify to the commitment of St. John's to preserve the European traditions.

Before proceeding to the conclusions it is interesting to note the economic improvement of the Windish-Americans at St. John's by comparing the historical situation of the first generation with the situation of the second and third generations. The statistical data for these comparisons was supplied by a 'Parish Study' conducted in 1971 by the Northeast Pennsylvania Synod of the

Lutheran Church in America. The survey of 141 parishoners attempted to construct a picture of St. John's for the Synod and the Church Council. With the information gathered by the interviewers the leaders of the church could expand their vision of ministry to include reasonable long-range goals that would meet the needs of the church and the community. Reducing the information supplied by the survey into tables one is able to see the economic growth of the Windish-American community after six decades of hard work.

Originally, the Winds lived in small homes on the Southside of Bethlehem. For this reason leaders of the Windish community chose to build St. John's on East Fourth Street. The parishoners could easily walk to the church located in the heart of the community. As the financial situation of the second and third generations improved they purchased larger homes in the more spacious outlying districts of Bethlehem. Thus, the original generation of parishoners who walked to the neighborhood church was replaced by succeeding generations who must drive to church. The following charts demonstrate the trend of the Winds to move out of the 'old neighborhood'.[51,52]

TABLE 2 TABLE 3

Although the original generation of immigrants had worked for subsistence wages, the suceeding generations of Windish-Americans were able to secure higher wages. The following charts show the percentage of employed parishoners and the levels of income.[53,54,55]

TABLE 4 TABLE 5

Conclusions

With a small piece of land and a tremendous amount of commitment to their Windish Lutheran heritage, the Winds from Prekmurje built a large thriving parish. Although the Winds were a small immigrant group with a unique history and dialect that sometimes isolated them from the larger Slovene community,

these ethnic qualities did not prevent them from associating with the larger Lutheran community. Under the capable and efficient leadership of their three pastor's St. John's developed an understanding of ministry that crossed ethnic barriers. Unlike some immigrant Lutheran parishes which allowed their ethnic heritage to isolate them from the national or regional church, St. John's Windish always united itself with the larger inter-ethnic and inter-district Lutheran synods. This vision was no doubt generated by the assistance of the German Lutherans in 1907. As a result of this the Windish community and Reverend Lambert always maintained an inclusive vision of ministry by working with neighboring Lutheran parishes in Bethlehem. Dr. Stiegler expanded this local vision after his arrival in 1914. As previously mentioned, when Dr. Stiegler assumed pastoral responsibilities at St. John's he was also appointed the first president of the Hungarian Lutheran Synod in America. Subsequently, St. John's enlarged its local vision by working with Hungarian parishes across the nation. In addition to the national responsibilities of the Hungarian synod, Dr. Stiegler continued to work with local and regional Lutheran ministeriums. When various regional and ethnic synods decided to merge and create the United Lutheran Church in America, Dr. Stiegler and St. John's supported this union by becoming supporting members of the organization. Five decades later when the Finns, Swedes, German and Danish synods merged to create the Lutheran Church in America, St. John's under the leadership of Reverend Flisser endorsed the union by uniting itself with the new church superstructure.

Another example of the broad inclusive vision of the Windish Lutheran community is its acceptance of new modes of worship. With the publication of Dr. Stiegler's Windish translation of the Service of Matins, St. John's became acquainted with the American worship service. As the English speaking segment of the parish grew the church expanded its understanding of ministry to include

English publications and Worship Services.

The history of St. John's is a story with three chapters. The first chapter begins with the early wave of immigrants from Prekmurje. In those early years from 1907 to 1914 the immigrants worked to establish themselves in their new homeland. Once the immigrants found housing and employment they dedicated themselves to building a church. After four years of sacrifice the parish had a pastor, owned a large piece of land and had constructed a simple basement structure in which they conducted their weekly worship. The second chapter begins with the installation of Dr. Stiegler. At this time the parish grew to provide spiritual and cultural leadership for the Windish community. The final chapter, the chapter of transistion, begins with the outbreak of the Second World War. The community, having become accustomed to adapting itself to the American stituation, was called upon to expand its concept of ministry with the implementation of English in the life of the parish.

The English ministry has grown over the last forty years. Presently, the English speaking ministry accomodates a major percentage of the 1,561 people who belong to the Windish Lutheran parish. [56] Although the majority of Windish-American people at St. John's speak English, their Windish roots are still evident in their church, their homes and their hearts.

TABLE 1

WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

YEAR	TOTAL YEARLY ATTENDANCE IN WINDISH SERVICES	AVERAGE WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	TOTAL YEARLY ATTENDANCE IN ENGLISH SERVICES	AVERAGE WEEKLY ATTENDANCE
1920	16,500	300	---	---
1930	19,250	350	---	---
1940	15,125	275	---	---
1950	13,750	250	9,350	170
****	******	***	*****	***
1958	9,824	246	13,347	243
1959	9,334	233	14,151	257
1960	-----	---	------	---
1961	7,955	199	13,592	247
****	*****	***	******	***
1966	6,269	157	12,926	235
1967	6,866	172	13,679	249
1968	6,826	171	14,021	255
****	*****	***	******	***
1972	4,069	102	15,002	273
1973	3,462	87	14,962	272
1974	3,202	80	12,710	231
****	*****	**	******	***
1982	2,007	50	11,408	207
1983	1,832	46	10,010	182

TABLE 2

MEMBERSHIP RESIDENCE

DISTANCE FROM THE CHURCH BUILDING

(1971)

Less than 1/2 mile	26.4%
1/2 to 1 mile	16.4%
1 to 3 miles	32.1%
3 miles and further	25.0%

TABLE 3

MEANS OF COMING TO CHURCH

(1971)

Ride in a car	76.5%
Ride with someone else	2.0%
Walk	21.5%

TABLE 4

EMPLOYMENT STATUS - MALE

(1971)

Full Time	80%
Retired	11%
College Student	4%
High-School Student	4%

EMPLOYMENT STATUS - FEMALE

Full Time	32%
Housewife	27%
Retired	21%
College Student	2%
High-School Student	8%

TABLE 5

AVERAGE YEARLY INCOME

(1971)

Above $15,000	10%
$12,000 - $15,000	17%
$10,000 - $12,000	18%
$7,000 - $10,000	21%
$5,000 - $7,000	20%
$3,000 - $5,000	7%
Under $3,000	8%

NOTES

1. Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups, s.v. "Slovenes" by Rudolph Susel, 935.

2. Ibid.

3. Ross Yates, ed., Bethlehem of Pennsylvania: The Golden Years 1841-1920, (Bethlehem: Lehigh Litho Inc, 1976), 325.

4. Ernest A. Stiegler, 'History of the Wends' Speech Manuscript, (Bethlehem: St. John's Windish Lutheran Church, 1941, Mimeographed), 9.

5. Ross Yates, ed., op cit., 325.

6. Ibid.

7. Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups, 934.

8. Ibid., 938.

9. Ernest A. Stiegler, 'History of the Wends', 5.

10. Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups, 934.

11. Ibid., 939.

12. Ibid., 934.

13. Ernest A. Stiegler, 'History of the Wends, 8.

14. Franc Sebjanic, The Protestant Movement in Pannonia, (Murska Sobota: Pomurska Zalozba, 1978), 52,53,57.

15. St. John's Windish Lutheran Church, '50th Anniversary' (Bethlehem: St. John's Windish Lutheran Church, 1960, Mimeographed), 3.

16. Ibid.

17. Ernest A. Stiegler, 'History of the Wends', 9.

18. St. John's Windish Lutheran Church, '50th Anniversary', 3.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid., 4.

23. 'Reverend E.A. Stiegler, 75, Dies In St. Luke's Hospital', Bethlehem Globe, 21 September 1964, Obituary.

24. St. John's Windish Lutheran Church, '50th Anniversary,' 4.

25. Ibid.

26. Reverend Frank Flisser, Telephone conversation, 17 February 1984.

27. Ernest A. Stiegler, translator, Bozse Szlüzsbe Réd, (Bethlehem: Amerikanszki Szlovencov Glas, 1936), 3-6.

28. Ibid., 7-8.

29. Ernest A. Stiegler, translator, Dr. Luther Martina Máli Kátechismus. (Bethlehem: Amerikanszki Szlovencov Glas, 1938).

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31. Ibid., 248.

32. St. John's Windish Lutheran Church, 'Parish Bulletin,' (Bethlehem: St. John's Windish Lutheran Church, 1944).

33. Sandor Polgar, Erdcése Jaboko, (Bethlehem: American Windish Publication Company, 1925).

34. Ibid.

35. Ernest A. Stiegler, 'History of the Wends', 7.

36. St. John's Windish Lutheran Church, 'Parish Bulletin,' (Bethlehem: St. John's Windish Lutheran Church, 1943).

37. St. John's Windish Lutheran Church, 'Parish Bulletin,' (Bethlehem: St. John's Windish Lutheran Church, 1944).

38. 'Reverend Ballek, 58, Dies During Pastoral Call' Bethlehem Globe, 24 January 1967.

39. Ibid.

40. Reverend Seminarian Ron Hari, Personal Correspondence, 27 February 1984.

41. St. John's Windish Lutheran Church, '50th Anniversary,' 7.

42. Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups, 939.

43. St. John's Windish Lutheran Church, '25th Anniversary of the Women's Missionary Society,' (Bethlehem: St. John's Windish Lutheran Church, 1953).

44. St. John's Windish Lutheran Church, 'Dedication of the Christian Education Building,' (Bethlehem: St. John's Windish Lutheran Church, 1956).

45. Ernest A. Stiegler, ...So Shall They Reap, (New York: Vantage Press, 1958).

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47. St. John's Windish Lutheran Church, 'Dues Book' (Bethlehem: St. John's Windish Lutheran Church.)

48. St. John's Windish Lutheran Church, 'Annual Report of 1983', 3.

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51. Bethlehem Area Study, St. John's Wendish Lutheran Church,Parish Study Report, (Wescosville: Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Lutheran Church in America, 1971), 8.

52. Ibid., 7.

53. Ibid., 9.

54. Ibid., 10.

55. Ibid., 11.

56. St. John's Windish Lutheran Church, 'Annual Report of 1983,' (Bethlehem: St. John's Windish Lutheran Church, 1983, Mimeographed).

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FIGURE CAPTIONS

Figure 1: Title page of the Windish Lutheran Service Book prepared by Dr. Ernest A. Stiegler in 1936.

Figure 2: Title page of Dr. Stiegler's 1938 translation of Luther's Small Catechism.

Figure 3: Title page of the Windish Lutheran Hymnal published in 1941.